

a short time, in the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies). Upset with the activities of the local American Federation of Labor unions and the general apathy expressed toward both immigrant workers and, specifically, lumber workers by both the Trades and Labour Congress and local labour councils, Finns led the charge to establish an Industrial Workers of the World presence in 1916. The IWW carried out its activities through Lumber Workers' Industrial Union support circles located in largely Finnish lumber camps. Although the organization did appeal to many English-speaking workers, the backbone of the IWW during this period became the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada. This had a lot to do with the conversion of leading organizers to the Wobbly cause. It was also the IWW and the Finns that took the lead in Northwestern Ontario in supporting the Russian Revolution as it had profoundly influenced political developments in Finland.

However, the War Measures Act and Section 98 of the Criminal Code enacted in 1918 virtually stopped all socialist activities in Canada. The organizations of Finns and other ethnic groups were particularly targeted due to their "socialist" tendencies imported from their homeland. The Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada ceased to operate and the Industrial Workers of the World was forced to go underground. Most Finnish workers in the region began to support the formation of the One Big Union in the month before the Winnipeg General Strike in spring 1919. All Finnish IWW auxiliaries that had existed before the war joined en masse these new organizations, and the One Big Union took control of the Finnish Labour Temple.

This situation was short-lived. Difference over how the organizations should be structured –

based on geography or industry (which the Finns supported) – led to fissures in the One Big Union and, in 1922, many left. The majority in the region went back to the Industrial Workers of the World, which once again gained control of the Labour Temple. Others, whose numbers were bolstered by an influx of new immigrants from Finland who had fought for the Reds in the Finnish Civil War, eventually joined the Community Party of Canada. It had established a foothold in the region by 1923 through the activities of Finns such as former Wobbly A.T. Hill, who had been had been swayed to the communist banner due to the events of 1917 and 1918.

By 1925, Finns made up about 60%, or 2,620 of 4,000, of the party's membership and operated largely through the Finnish Organization of Canada. They established their own hall at 316 Bay Street in Port Arthur, and, between 1923 and 1935, the two organizations fought for the allegiance of Finnish workers. Royal Canadian Mounted Police reports at the time reveal that the Finns in Fort William and Port Arthur alone were believed to represent over 15% of all Bolshevik agitation in Canada during this time.

After flirting with revolutionary and direct action from 1914 to 1935, Finns turned, at least at the Lakehead, back to the social democracy that had driven them from their homes, as many threw their lot in with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the new "voice" of the left after the Second World War. Subsequent migration of Finns in the late 1950s and 1960s further led to involvement in established political parties and, by 1962, control of the Finnish Labour Temple for the first time in almost 30 years did not rest with a socialist organization.

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